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INITIAL SKILL TRAINING FOR NAVY ENLISTED PERSONNEL.(U)
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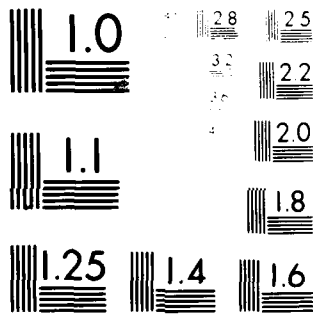
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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

B-203704

The Honorable John F. Lehman
The Secretary of the Navy

Attention: Comptroller of the Navy
(NCB-53)

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Subject: Initial Skill Training for Navy Enlisted
Personnel, (FPCD-81-56)

We recently completed a survey of the Navy's initial skill training for enlisted personnel. Our survey addressed how the Navy determines which job tasks a sailor should know, how it insures the tasks are taught, and whether fleet supervisors are satisfied with recent graduates of initial skill training.

We are pleased to note that the Navy is taking action to improve initial skill training by developing new training curricula specifically linked to the job tasks relevant to the Navy ratings. Because these new curricula are not yet fully developed, however, we could not assess the effectiveness of the Navy's efforts to improve initial skill training. Although at this time we do not plan further analyses of the Navy's efforts to link job tasks to training curricula, we express here some concerns that we believe should receive attention as the Navy moves forward in improving initial skill training.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Initial skill training in the Navy is intended to introduce a recruit to the basics of an occupational rating so that he may contribute to fleet operations. The effectiveness of this training is important because of the significant cost to the Navy (approximately \$420 million in 1980) and the long-term impact on Navy manpower levels and preparedness.

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To assess the effectiveness of initial skill training, we reviewed the Navy's task analysis, curricula development, and training appraisal process. We interviewed knowledgeable civilian and military personnel at the major commands responsible for training--Chief of Naval Education and Training, Pensacola, Florida; Chief of Naval Technical Training, Memphis, Tennessee; Service School Command at Great Lakes, Illinois; Navy Occupational Development and Analysis Center, and the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Manpower, Personnel and Training) Chief of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C. We also interviewed senior petty officers and initial skill training graduates on two ships. During this process, we examined relevant documents to gain a further understanding of initial skill training.

THE NAVY IS LINKING SPECIFIC JOB TASKS TO TRAINING CURRICULA

In 1975, Instructional Systems Development (ISD) procedures were approved by the Navy. These procedures provided the Navy with a means to further identify and teach the tasks enlisted personnel should know. In implementing these procedures, the Navy has systems to (1) develop useful job-task inventories, (2) develop new curricula using these inventories, and (3) provide feedback on course quality.

In the early 70's (prior to ISD procedures), the Navy began developing information on the job tasks relevant to enlisted ratings. This activity was performed by the Navy Occupational Development and Analysis Center. Until recently, the results of the Center's job-task surveys were primarily used to establish, monitor, and adjust the Navy's occupational standards. The Center's results were used sparingly by curricula developers. As a result, curricula were generally developed by using existing curricula, the knowledge of subject matter experts (senior petty officers), and fleet surveys.

In 1980, the Occupational Development and Analysis Center began performing training importance surveys for the purpose of identifying (1) the initial skill training tasks applicable to selected ratings, (2) their relative importance, and (3) how these tasks should be taught to enlisted personnel. The results of these surveys are being provided to Instructional Program and Development Centers. We understand that the Development Centers will use the results to establish learning objectives for the new curricula they are developing.

The Instructional Program and Development Centers were established in 1977 to carry out specific ISD processes--to analyze, design, and develop instructional plans and material. These centers are responsible for developing new curricula for approximately 30 ratings by the end of fiscal year 1985.

A formal feedback system on the quality of initial skill and other Navy training--the Training Appraisal Program--has been active since 1979. By June 1981, the Navy will have initiated fleet surveys on almost all of the larger initial skill training courses. Although the fleet surveys are not yet based on curricula developed by the Instructional Program and Development Centers, the results are important to the Instructional Systems Development process. For example, the appraisal reports summarizing the fleet's feedback show that a significant number of the senior petty officers surveyed are dissatisfied with the performance of recent graduates and with the content of initial skill training for several occupational ratings. For these ratings, the surveys identified the specific tasks and learning objectives that need attention.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF THE NAVY'S EFFORTS TO
IMPROVE INITIAL SKILL TRAINING

Through the Instructional Systems Development process, the Navy can address much of the fleet's dissatisfaction with current training by insuring that essential tasks will be taught to enlisted personnel during initial skill training. However, because of present and projected manpower and equipment shortages, we remain concerned about whether the Navy will commit adequate resources to improving the initial skill training.

The Navy needs to develop new curricula for approximately 19 more ratings by the end of fiscal year 1985. Since the start of this effort in 1977, only 11 of approximately 30 curricula have been completed, 7 of which are being implemented. Because new curricula for the first 11 ratings took 4 years to develop, completing the others in the remaining 4 years will be a challenge. The Navy's ability to meet this deadline depends on its willingness to commit adequate resources to the Instructional Program Development Centers.

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The Navy's efforts to properly implement the new curricula, once developed, are also a concern because of manpower and equipment shortages. To maximize training effectiveness, the Navy will need to provide the resources (manpower and equipment) needed to properly conduct the training. Completed curricula packages identify these resources.

We are continuing to assess other aspects of initial skill training in the Navy. Our attention is now focused on whether modifications to the traditional Navy training pipeline could improve skill development, personnel utilization, and facilitate better pipeline management.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, and other interested persons.

Sincerely yours,


Clifford I. Gould
Director